

THE HIDDEN HOUSE

Concealed inside a hill, this hobbit-like house by Aslam Sham Architects could well have grown out of the earth

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An arched opening punctuates a flagstone wall, serving as the secondary point of entry

“It had to be a statement house; timeless and classic, but also functional”

Ajmal P. was always a dreamer. When other kids his age were feverishly chasing careers in law or medicine or engineering, he was busy manifesting a startup—an effort that not only paid off, but landed him in that coveted category of entrepreneurs who had “made it”. With many of his childhood checkboxes ticked, one of the only things left on his checklist was building a home. So when he found the perfect site for it, he wasted no time in finding someone who could help him bring it to life. An Instagram search led him to Sham Salim and Aslam Karadan of [aslam.sham architects](#). One phone call and one meeting later, he was convinced that the pair was right for the job. After all, with a contoured site like this one, it was an architectural undertaking achievable by but a precious few.

“We doubted the first plan that was presented to us,” laughs Ajmal when asked how it all came together, “but the final result surprised us all.” Besides specifying a basic configuration—of five bedrooms, a central courtyard, a home theatre and an outdoor pool—he was particular about the aesthetic. It had to be a statement house; timeless and classic, but also functional. “It was important to him that the home accommodate his parents and his siblings in equal spirit, so we had to factor in multiple considerations with regard to the layout,” shares Sham.

For Sham and Aslam, the site’s contours served as the guiding light, resulting in a blueprint that let the landscape sweep over the home à la a hobbit house. The decision not only gave the dwelling a storybook effect, but also succeeded in hiding the scale and complexity of the architecture. “It was definitely a challenge manipulating the topography in a way that would afford multiple levels with minimum steps,” notes Aslam. The multiple levels (seven in total), of course, aren’t always a bad thing. Besides making for excellent exercise, they also serve to divide the home into various zones. First, appears the foyer, then below it, the living and prayer rooms. Another step down leads to the lounge, dining room and kitchen, where also lies a charming koi pond.

Likewise, the bedroom blocks are divided across three levels.

The interior echoes the land it inhabits, with raw finishes and minimal decor. The floor alternately wears antique-finish granite and leather-finish Kota, while wooden treads warm the staircase. In an effort to bring out the texture and character of the materials (and encourage barefoot adventures), the architects kept the palette limited to matte finishes. “We tried not to fill the home up with too many things as we wanted to leave room for memories,” says the pair. After all, for Ajmal and his family, there are many, many more to be made. ♦

instagram [@aslamsham_architects](#)



The vaulted entrance of the prayer room is an abstract representation of the archways associated with religious spaces



From top: The koi pond is the heart of the home, literally and figuratively. It is where the family gathers for reflection and conversation. Surrounding it are communal spaces, namely the family lounge, the dining space and the kitchen; The living room is steeped in dark, brooding tones. The decor is pared back to a bare minimum. The furniture is from Dtale and Homework, while the lights are from Aura Electric

The dining room echoes the living room in palette, with an abiding greyneess that holds a mirror to the landscape





The kitchen is covered in sleek, dark finishes and looks out to the koi pond



Situated on the highest level, the master bedroom is a quiet oasis that mutes out the surroundings. A balcony connects the room to the front of the house

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